

INTER NOS

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Editorial

By request we are devoting the September issue of Inter Nos to a group of prize winning stories and poems, and to others judged worthy of special honors, by the Cabrini Literary Guild and the Atlantic Monthly Essay, Story and Poetry Contest, respectively.

We offer our ocngratulations to these student contributors and to the faculty members who directed, encouraged and prodded their efforts.

The creative writing class has furnished winners before both to the Cabrini Literary Guild, to the Atlantic Monthly Contests and others. We hope that fellow students reading these contributions, may be stimulated to like efforts.

We have on hand material offered by some who did not enter the contests. This will appear in the December issue, so let these contributors not be disappointed that their names are missing from the Table of Contents of the present number. A comfortable feeling comes with the thought "In July we have some copy on hand for our December Inter Nos."

We offer a warm welcome to our students for the year 1952-1953, whether they be "new" or "old". May God's blessing be on the scholastic year, its work, its students and its faculty.

SISTER MARY DOLOROSA

"Whose blood is reddest . . ."

By Barbara Selna

Winner of first prize (\$200.00) in the Contest sponsored by "The Cabrini Literary Guild".

Manuelita Hernandez was my best friend. It had never mattered that she was of Hopi-Mexican parentage and that my great-grandparents were Londoners. My father owned a big general store in Azurite, a copper mining camp in the western Rockies, and Manuelita's mother cashiered at J. C. Penney's for her fatherless family. We were both born in Azurite. We climbed its telephone poles together and prospected in its mountains; guided tourists through its abandoned buildings and danced in its gravel streets on the Fourth of July. On hot summer afternoons we sat on the brink of *Glory Hole*, tossing pebbles down into the 500-foot open pit and listening to their reverberating echoes. Munching on tortillas and beans, we often listened to Senor Gomez tell of the rip-roarings of Azurite's prosperity days when thundering blasts shook the houses; when smelter smoke burned the roses and killed the grass; when monthly payday for the 4000 miners occasioned a half-week revel; when disastrous fires had three times leveled the town, prompting waggish headlines like: "Azurite burns again! Fire destroys entire business district of twenty-four saloons and fourteen Italian-Chinese restaurants!" Those were the days when Senor Gomez and his 200 burros hauled the town's water supply through Main Street and spent their nights around the \$50,000 gambling tables or watched a riotous pistol fight in the saloon.

But all of Azurite's copper ore is gone now, and today only 450 weary miners remain to cash their checks at the one-room bank—perhaps for the last time.

Manuelita and I used to dramatize parts of *As You Like It* under the houses, which cling precariously on their stilts to the 33-degree mountain incline. We would pick the few remaining roses near the entrance of the mine tunnel and listen to the ghost of Azurite flit through the empty mine shafts.

"Manuelita—honorary society president, chemistry award student, and cheer leader in Azurite High School—had been chosen princess for the Guadalupe festival. I—student body social chairman and choir soloist, had been elected Junior class president. Together we had won two district championships as tennis doubles partners and had prepared together for the state tournament.

In every respect cosmopolitan Azurite enjoyed a perfect harmony between its "Mexican-American" and "Anglo-American" population. They rented adjacent shacks in the gulch town and hung their hand-wrung laundry on the same rusty wires; or they lived in apartments, sharing the one piano on which the children practiced, only when graveyard-shift fathers were awake; or in fancy brick

houses, listening to Metropolitan Opera broadcasts together, exchanging *Mademoiselle* and *Atlantic* magazines. For more than fifty years Anglo-American "guys" dated their "gals," and Mexican-American caballeros serenaded their black-eyed señoritas. But if Antonio Martinez wanted a good jitterbugging partner, he did not hesitate to ask red-headed Sally O'Sullivan.

The mine managers—the law-makers and dictators of Azurite—had, for over fifty years, recognized this ideal situation and did much to foster it. They sent coal and firewood to the poor, brown or white, and they furnished all the churches with trees at Christmas time.

But this Utopian existence ended two years ago when the *Copper Burro* mine changed managers. The new chief radically reversed the policy in Azurite. In this he was largely aided by his daughter, Lula May, a member of the Junior class with Manuelita and me.

Lula May, sixteen, intelligent, pink and blonde, made her abilities recognized immediately. Glee club, drama guild, student council—all welcomed her witty enthusiasm. She and I both won soprano solos in the Christmas cantata and became good friends at the nightly rehearsals. I felt rather flattered that she invited me to help her with the preparations for her elaborate Christmas party.

I remember the day well. Lula May greeted me in a red velvet lounging coat, and we sat in front of the crackling fireplace, writing invitations. At four o'clock her mother brought us Welsh cookies and tea and played the Christmas carol records. While I stamped the envelopes, Lula May checked her list of names, making sure that no one had been forgotten.

"Can you think of anyone else, Gwen?" she asked, as we picked up our materials.

"But where are the invitations for Manuelita and Cruz?" I reminded her.

"Really, Gwen," this with a bored sigh, "you know I had no intention of inviting them, even if Manuelita does sing in the cantata. Best not bother with the Mexicans. . . . You understand."

I bit my tongue and picked up the scraps from the floor. No, I did not understand. When we were finished I left, explaining abruptly that I had to meet Manuelita at the dentist's office.

The Christmas cantata delighted everyone. So did the party, in Lula May's estimation. But we Azurites felt the underlying tension of something amiss. As we walked home over the narrow gauge trail after the party, the boys strode ahead, angrily kicking pebbles into the canyon. We girls walked in grim silence too, until Gertie put her arm around me, saying, "Anyway, Lula May won't be able to continue her tactics at the Valentine Dance, even if she is chair-mán. It's school sponsored and everyone is invited."

But at the Valentine Dance the tension was pulled even tighter.

When Manuelita and I arrived at the dance, in Peter Pan and Alice in Wonderland costumes, we were each given a door-prize valentine. Mine was red and hers was white. Before the music began, Lula May called those having red valentines to the front end of the hall. I giggled to her as the orchestra played, "Your idea of red and white valentines sounds exciting. What Valentine game are we going to play?" She tossed her blond curls and smirked as she danced swiftly by. I heard her whisper to her partner, "Innocence abroad!" Not until the evening was almost over did I realize that all of my partners, holders of red valentines, had been Anglo-American boys only.

The week after the dance school buzzed with complaints and questions. My best friends avoided me, and conversations were strained. Standing in line at the water fountain I waited for Cruz to turn on the faucet, as was his custom, but he stood aloof.

"What's wrong, Cruz?" I teased in good humor.

"What's wrong, you ask?" Cruz replied seriously. Then he added quietly, "This segregation idea—I don't like it. You weren't in on the plan, were you, Gwen?"

Of course I wasn't in on the plan! Why Cruz had always been my favorite waltz partner. But did the students think that I . . . My friends continued to inquire about the strange dance arrangement. One afternoon the Junior class teacher drove me home. She understood the problem.

"I know as well as you students where the poison lies," she confided, "but don't say anything to Lula May about this."

However, the complaints and questions continued. The result—a student-faculty meeting. But what could the power-less faculty members do against the manager of the *Copper Burro* and his daughter?

The weeks following buried the problem in mid-term examinations. Then the Girls' Athletic Association began the spring program of intra-mural, interscholastic sports. Manuelita and I had twice won the district tennis championship, and this year Coach Kelley was training us for the state finals. From 8:00 to 8:45 each morning we tracked around the courts to build stamina and wind; we vied with former rival teams after school, perfecting our back-hand drives and net slams to millimeter accuracy. Lula May scoffed at our tireless efforts.

"You probably won't be able to take part anyway," she jeered with a saucy toss of her blond ringlets.

We gripped our battered rackets and played even harder.

"Confound it!" Coach would shout as he swung and missed the ball completely. "Your system of alley-balls is tops! It's too good for me!"

All week we observed rigid training hours for the big day—Saturday. Our suitcases were packed and ready for the trip, except for the new tennis shoes. Wednesday Manuelita telephoned Coach to ask if they had arrived.

"He never answered my question, Gwen," Manuelita complained after Coach hung up. "But he asked us to come down to his office. The shoes must have arrived, and he probably wants us to try them on."

Later she added, "You know, Coach Kelley will need a good rest after this tournament. He was so upset over the telephone—stammering and unfinished sentences."

When we bounded into his office, Coach was staring at his wastebasket, nervously fingering his tennis racket. I turned to Manuelita and saw my question written in her raised eyebrows.

"Better sit down, girls," he stammered huskily, not looking up.

We stumbled into the rickety office benches. Coach was tense. Old-looking, we thought. Hollow-eyed and livid. We waited.

"Girls . . ." He hesitated. "I guess Saturday's off . . ." He pressed his racket down on his knee and looked over our heads out the window.

"An order from the mine manager arrived." He paused, anxious to say the words but fearing to utter them. He fumbled in his pocket for a letter, then scratched his chin with it.

"Yes—?" Manuelita leaned forward trying to pry the words from Coach. "Yes—?"

"Girls, I guess Saturday's tournament is off," he repeated.

I jerked to attention this time, prepared for the worst.

"The *Copper Burro* chief says . . ." Coach read the letter again, hoping he had misunderstood at the first reading; he closed his eyes and swallowed.

"Girls, the manager of the C.B. says no Mexican students can attend the touranment. He says he's sorr—"

Coach jammed the letter into his pocket and fled across the yard. I watched him disappear.

Then I turned to Manuelita. Her gnarled brown fingers covered her black eyes. I watched the tears trickling down her thin cheeks. I slipped my arm around her thin waist, but she pulled away.

Then grabbing Manuelita securely by the hand, I gripped both tennis rackets tight under my arm and started for the door. She tried to pull loose, but I held fast. I dragged her behind me over the narrow gauge trail, fiercely kicking stones from my path.

"Wait, Gwen!" she panted breathlessly, still trying to free herself. "Where are you taking me?"

"To *Glory Hole*," I blurted and lunged forward.

We stopped at the brink of the perilous pit. Still clutching Manuelita, I stared, motionless, at the treacherous rocks below.

"Don't Gwen, you mustn't! Please don't!" Manuelita took hold of my arm and tried to pull me away. I set my lip with determination.

With cold finality I laid her racket at her feet. Then, closing my eyes, I took careful aim. Manuelita screamed. I flung my racket down to the jagged crags below. The reverberating echo still haunts the inhabitants of the *Copper Burro* town, echoing their question, Why?

*A LOVER SCORNS HIS LOVED,
YET IN REALITY SHE HATH
HIM IN CAPTIVITY*

By Shirley Burke

A "Merit Poem" in the Atlantic Monthly Contest

*How can I love the stubble-beard and nose
So red, the smell of musty pipe and lotion,
Unruly hair that matches garish clothes,
(The shirts of purple-pink that strike his notion)?
How can I bear the teasing jokes and taunts
Of manly power, disdainful looks of scorn
That mock my fragile strength and female wants,
Pretending he was not of woman born?
I think instead how helpless is his glance
When I am crying, and how he soothes my care,
And I enjoy his jealous fretting chance
To disregard another, because a simple stare
Betrays the words I want to know.
Another brawny male is now in tow.*

Trailing Clouds of Glory

By Shirley Burke

Winner of second prize (\$100.00) in the Contest sponsored by "The Cabrini Literary Guild".

I was eight years old at the time—that twilight age between childhood and understanding of the adult world. I had been sled-riding down the steep hill across from my grandmother's big, white house. Alternately I slid down on my rusty sled and climbed the steep incline. The wind hindered me, causing me to gasp the air that felt like cold knives in my chest; yet I continued.

I loved the glassy-black skies pinpricked by white stars, iced wind, clean snow sifted by cloudy sieves across the lawn, drifts of snow shining like electric sparks in the moonlight—cold and hard. Yes, I loved this world of whiteness.

A heavy, mahogany door from the house opposite the hill opened, revealing a figure silhouetted against the multicolored light of the Christmas tree. Grandmother called:

"It's getting late, dear. You'd better come in."

I picked up my sled. On the sidewalk the ice lay in fairy-fingered patterns. I glided across to the lawn steeped in snow. My high boots sunk down, and my body followed almost to my waist.

"Get out of the snow and come in," Grandmother said in a final tone.

I sighed and decided it would be best to obey. Besides, the thought of supper, a special Christmas Eve supper excited me. Entering in the back (because Grandmother would never permit me to dirty the front part of the house with wet galoshes), I peeled off my plaid scarf, jacket, dripping mittens, boots, and soaked ski-pants. The last were the most odious of all because they were bulky, itchy, and nearly impossible to get on or off.

The smell of wet wool was mitigated by that of something baking. I bounced into the kitchen where my grandmother, mother, and three aunts were preparing dinner. In this age of mechanized living, Grandmother clung tenaciously to the custom of baking bread. Loaves, fresh and soft, emitted a fragrant odor. Little cakes filled with poppy-seed, cinnamon apples, and cheese were arranged on lacy napkins. Mother and my aunts, following Grandmother's direction, were mixing, heating, and tasting foods while bustling back and forth from the kitchen to the dining room, carrying pots, plates, and linens.

I wanted to help, too. Could I? No, I could not. I'd just be in the way. Besides, everything was ready. I could play with my cousins, they advised.

Ben, Junior, who was four years older than I, sat in a corner,

reading a comic book. Dodo, a year older than myself, was looking for a loaf of raisin bread to eat with an onion. Junior did not interest me. He was a boy. Moreover, I rarely saw him, for he lived in a neighboring city. Dodo, on the other hand, was my intimate and consort in various escapades. Since she lived only two blocks away, it was a simple matter to cooperate in such ventures as stealing tomatoes from Grandfather's garden or selling lemonade on the front lawn. As I started to look for some raisin bread also, I was interrupted by the call of "dinner's ready."

I skipped to the dining room where Grandfather and Grandmother directed the seating. My aunts and uncles and parents faced each other on opposite sides while Grandmother and Grandfather sat at the heads of the table, enthroned like royalty. Grandfather unfolded a napkin on his lap and picked up the bread platter. Grandmother coughed. He looked guilty as he rose from the varnished arm-chair that matched the heavy, ornamented table. The setting was like a medieval feast given by lord and lady for their retainers except for Grandfather's simple, modern prayer: "Let us give thanks for this Christmas Eve meal."

When he finished, I nudged Mother, "Where can I sit?"

"You children will have to eat in the kitchen because there isn't enough room here."

I gazed at the table filled with traditional Yuletide dishes—hot cabbage with mushroom sauce, cheeses, fishes baked in wine, prune and poppy-seed cakes. Over all the pungent odor of steaming coffee dominated.

"I don't want to eat in the kitchen. I want to stay," I cried.

"Now, now, let's be a good girl and not make a fuss." Mother led me into the kitchen and seated me next to Junior.

"I'll bring your plates," she said.

Junior leaned toward me. "Next year I won't have to eat with you any more. Mamma said so. I'll be twelve years old," he boasted.

Dodo and I looked at each other. "Well, we won't either, so there," I said.

"Oh, yeah!"

"Yeah," we chorused.

Mother came in, carrying our plates.

"What are you children doing? You'd better be good or Santa Claus won't bring you any presents," she warned.

"What's he going to bring me, Mamma?"

"You'll see," she smiled.

When she left, Junior scoffed, "I know Santa Claus doesn't bring anything. Your Mommy and Daddy do. It's just a made up story."

"No, it isn't," said Dodo.

"Santa Claus is true," I added.

"Well, you're just babies anyway," finished Junior.

Babies! Why I wasn't a baby any more. I went to school by myself. I didn't have to take a nap in the afternoon like little cousin Linda did. Sometimes I could even stay up until nine o'clock at night. If Santa wasn't true, if he didn't bring presents, I would know. Somebody would tell me. What if Junior was right? Was he just fibbing? I had to find out. But how? I know. Grandmother would tell me. I would ask her. She would tell me Santa was real. Then Junior would see. A Baby!

After dinner I crept into her room. She was resting in a comfortable, calico-covered chair opposite wide, latticed windows painted in icy patterns by the cold. She looked toward the windows without noticing me.

"Grandma," I said in a small voice.

She turned and smiled. "Yes, dear?"

"Grandma, I want to ask you something." I paused and then blurted, "Is there a Santa Claus?"

"Why, of course, why do you ask?"

"Junior said there wasn't any. He said Mommy and Daddy bring me presents. He called me a baby."

"Come here and sit on my lap."

I looked up and watched her adjust the clasp holding her braided-white hair drawn to the back of her neck. As she fumbled, I tapped my foot against the leg of the chair. Why was she taking so long? What would she say? I studied her clear, blue eyes that reflected the ice-patterns of the windows.

After a while she began: "Long ago, God sent His Son, Jesus, to this earth. He gave the little baby Christ as a gift to us to help us get to heaven."

"And He sent Him on Christmas Day," I interrupted.

"That's right. Now Santa Claus is really Saint Nicholas, who used to give poor people gifts. He thought that if God were good enough to give us His Son, it would be nice to give each other presents on Christmas Day."

"But who gets my presents?"

"Since Saint Nicholas is in heaven now, your mother and father take his place by giving you gifts."

"Oh, o-o-o."

"You understand, don't you dear?"

"Yes," I answered, pretending I did. But it won't be fun any more if Santa Claus doesn't bring me presents, I thought.

Grandmother looked puzzled. Then she brightened.

"How would you like to go to Midnight Mass with us?" she asked.

Midnight Mass! I had never gone before because everyone said it was too late for me to stay up. I always went on Christmas morning to Church.

"Yes, Grandma," I responded excitedly.

"But you must not tell Dodo or Junior. We'll just keep it a secret."

"I promise," I said as I reached up to give her a bear-hug.

For the remainder of the evening I was alternately disappointed and elated. Though going to Midnight Mass was something different and would allow me to stay up after my hated bedtime, I still could not believe that Santa Claus wasn't real. In heaven, grandmother said—but I wasn't satisfied.

I sprawled on the floor under the Christmas tree in the living room and played with the kings, camels, and shepherds by the stable. Relatives moved from room to room, chatting and laughing. Dodo and Junior argued over a checker game they played on the coffee table across from the tree. I was still debating about Santa Claus. If he didn't really come down the chimney, Christmas would be spoiled. I looked at the red and green stockings hanging from the mantle over the fireplace. Moving toward the flaming-red logs, I crouched on my knees to brave the hot breath on my cheeks. I peered up the chimney. It did look narrow. How could he get through? Grandmother must have been right.

I felt a hand on my shoulder.

"Watch out, you'll burn yourself."

It was Grandmother. She had come to get me ready for Church. Taking me into her room so that Dodo and Junior would not know where I was going, she dressed me in my new, blue velvet coat with the ball-shaped angora buttons. Instead of the detestable ski-pants, I wore only boots and heavy stockings. I'd show Junior! Babies didn't go to Midnight Mass.

Grandmother said she and I would start earlier and walk to Church instead of riding. Outside in the gleaming white, I laughed as our boots cracked on the dry snow, making footprints. Moonlight on drifting snowflakes made them shine like fireflies on a summer evening, lighting up the whole sky. Evergreen trees stooping to kiss the ground with their arms full of snow, created for me the winter fairyland I loved.

Yet as we passed by houses with Christmas trees reflecting colored lights on white lawns, I remembered Santa Claus. The trees were a mockery. In spite of the Christmas Eve dinner, the privilege of going to Midnight Mass, and the beauty of this night, something was missing—something had gone out of the joy of Christmas. There was no longer any mystery. It didn't matter what gifts I received; my parents brought them, not the jolly driver of the reindeer, not the King of the North Pole who supervised the toy shop, not the watchful judge who weighed my good and bad actions.

As we neared the Church, I heard angelic bells ringing, "Glory be to God on high." The red-brick Church, its roof heavy with snow, opened its doors revealing a galaxy of color. We climbed the slippery steps and stepped down the aisle to the front of the Church. Along the edges of the pointed Gothic arch enclosing the altar were in-

scribed the words, "Venite, adoramus." Surrounding the altar were large evergreens decorated with blue lights ranging from the floor to the ceiling. By the side altar nestled the Christmas crib protected by full-life statues of Mary and Joseph, the Three Kings, and several shepherds. Above the crib three angels hovered.

Grandmother and I kneeled before the crib. I peered only at the Infant Jesus resting on the straw. People were putting pennies, nickels, and dimes in a glass container as their offerings. I put in a nickel that Grandmother gave me. A bell tinkled, signaling that Mass was beginning. I wanted to stay, but we had to go to our pews.

I will never forget that Mass. The priest in his rich vestments, the jeweled trees reaching to heaven, the choir blending in hymns of adoration, all impressed and dazzled me. I had never seen anything like this! Yet it was that simple crib that held my attention most of all. The magnificence and sublimity of this night somehow made me forget that Santa Claus wouldn't come down the chimney. Gifts, candy, and nuts no longer seemed important. In some small measure, I began to comprehend what Grandmother had said. We give to others because God gave His Son to us. Even though Saint Nicholas was in heaven, it didn't matter. The only thing that was important was that little crib out of which all happiness flowed. Wordsworth understood when he said:

*But trailing clouds of glory do we come
From God who is our home.
Heaven lies about us in our infancy.*

INTIMATIONS OF IMMORTALITY

CHRISTMAS CARD

By Lillian Pereyra

Winner of First Prize (\$100.00) in the Atlantic Monthly Poetry Contest

*He's always pictured lying in a manger
While mother arms above Him
Are empty crossed upon her breast.
Lying on cold stiff straw,
Splintered wood surrounds Him
And dust is haloed over His head.
Why couldn't she have snatched Him
From straw and wood and dust,
And pressed His living body
Against her living breast?
—What others would be quick to do—
But even then, she knew . . .*

Fry—Eliot

By Ann Scott

Rated a "Top Paper" in the Atlantic Monthly Essay Contest

The Lady's Not for Burning, a verse drama by Christopher Fry provides a challenging study particularly when evaluated in the light of the principles formulated by T. S. Eliot in *Poetry and Drama*. Eliot has drawn these principles from a study of his own verse plays. They are:

1. "Poetry . . . must justify itself dramatically and not merely be fine poetry shaped into a dramatic form."¹
2. "The audience . . . should be too intent on the plot to be wholly conscious of the medium."²
3. "A mixture of prose and verse is generally to be avoided."³
4. To "bring poetry into the world in which the audience lives and to which it returns when it leaves the theatre (so that) our own sordid, dreary, daily world would be illumined and transfigured."⁴
5. Eliot's highest aim is "the perfection of verse drama which would be a design of human action and of words, such as to present at once the two aspects of dramatic and musical order."⁵ This is a feeling we are aware of in a kind of temporary detachment from action; a feeling which we can only detect, so to speak, out of the corner of the eye and can never completely focus."⁶

Considering the first principle, self-justification on the use of poetry in the dramatic form:—there are conflicting opinions about *The Lady*. Walcott Gibbs of the *New Yorker* (Nov. 18, 1950) says, "This is a frail and airy piece of work, but since Mr. Fry's intent is clearly literary adornment rather than dramatic activity, it serves its purpose well enough."⁷ If this statement is true then, *The Lady* should not have been written or it should have been written in another medium. Mr. Gibbs could have been confused by the tone in which the dramatic activity was presented. To follow a man so sick of life that he wants to be hanged, whose "flesh/weights like a thousand years,"⁸ from a death wish to a life wish seems as

¹T.B. Eliot, *Poetry and Drama* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1951), p. 10.

²*Ibid.* pp. 10-11.

³*Ibid.* p. 13.

⁴*Ibid.* pp. 31-32.

⁵ *Ibid.* p. 43.

⁶*Ibid.* p. 42.

⁷"The Theatre," XXVI, No. 39 (Nov. 18, 1950), p. 77.

⁸Christopher Fry, *The Lady's Not for Burning* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1950), p. 4.

worthy a dramatic activity as that presented in the Cocktail Party.⁹ However Fry gives his play "the tone of speech which we normally associate with zest."¹⁰ Whereas Eliot keeps his dramas a level matching the theme. Thomas Mendip's speeches ("Since opening time I've been/Propped at the bar of heaven and earth, between/The wall-eye of the moon and the brandy cask of the sun,/Growling thick songs about jolly good fellows/In a mumping pub where the ceiling drips humanity/Until I've drunk myself sick/. . . So put me on your waiting list/With a note recommending preferential treatment."—"the mountain belly of Time laboured/And brought forth mon, the mouse"—

"Half this grotesque life I spend in a state/of slow decomposition, using/The name of unconsidered God as a pedestal/On which I stand and bray that I'm best/of beasts, until under some patient/Moon or other I fall to pieces, life/A cake of dung." show a complete revulsion from flesh, yet the way he speaks and the dialogue of the other characters gives the illusion of joy in living. In this can be seen a definite dramatic activity, but the problem of the plot being subject to the medium is a question of interpretation.

The problem which arises here is whether it is appropriate dramatic form for the plot to be subject to the medium. Eliot says it is not, but Tynton Judson in the *English Stage* says,

"Plot has always been the curse of the serious theatre, and indeed of serious literature of any kind! One is tempted to ask whether the drama is at last to be freed from the necessity to tell a story. For all other arts, including painting and even music, had by 19th century standards this constraint imposed upon them. And/if/ like the novel, the drama is finding freedom from the necessity to tell a story what will replace it? Is laughter and verbal magic and character enough? There must clearly be always some minimum of plot. . . . One may, however, hazard a guess that a new type of drama is evolving in which plot—as happened to melody in music and story in the novel—is losing its paramount importance."¹¹

The Lady fits much more easily into this description of the new drama than into Eliot's principle of medium subjection to plot. However Christopher Fry destroys the singleness of dramatic action at times. This fault is well stated by Walter Kerr in *Commonweal* (Dec. 1, 1950).

"Occasionally Mr. Fry forgets and indulges himself in the pure delight of all that can be said. I am so grateful for the method of saying it that I am willing to indulge him his indulgence, but the audience isn't likely to."¹²

⁹In this play we follow characters from actual death to life.

¹⁰Derek Stanford, *Christopher Fry, An Appreciation* (New York: Peter Nevill Ltd., 1951), p. 219.

¹¹(Toronto: Geo. S. Harrop and Co. Ltd., 1951), pp 216-217.

¹²"The Stage," *LIII* (Dec. 1, 1950), p. 196.

There is dialogue which does not advance the situation as seen in Margaret's speech to Alizon—"You're a pretty child/And mercifully without spots, unlike/The cowslip. O heavens we have all been young." ff., and again when Thomas is musing on his sadness—"There is/The interminable tumbling of the great grey/Main of moonlight washing over/The little oyster-shell of this month of April." ff. The richness of the relevant passages is tiring. And the superabundance of beauty makes the play at times exhausting. Contradictory arguments exist for the validity of Eliot's first principle and the problem of Fry's adherence to it.

I have concluded however, that Fry minimizes plot and stresses character, laughter, and verbal image.

Eliot's second principle states that the audience should not be conscious of the poetry. This is true in reading. The verse was very flexible, fitting the characters well, and the exposition followed smoothly. Notice the ease of the conversation between Alizon, Thomas, and Richard (see pp. 5 and ?). The awareness is of words and phrases rather than rhythm or meter. Such unusual feelings and descriptions as—"My well-born father . . . maintains/A castle as draughty as a tree. At every sunset,/it falls into the river, and fish swim through its walls,"—I've an April blindness. Once you know my qualities/I can drop back into a quite brilliant/Humility! "If existence will/Molest a man with beauty, how can he help/Trying to impose on her boundary/Of his two bare arms?" "Bedlam, ma'am, and the battlefield/Uncle Adam died on. He was shot/To bits with the core of an apple/Which some fool of a serpent in the artillery/Had shoved into God's cannon."—keep the reader aware that the dialogue is different. The blank verse is unobtrusive because of the natural and conversational tone of this dialogue.

This feeling of medium unconsciousness was carried to live audiences as can be seen from the following reviews:

John Mason Brown, *Saturday Review of Literature*.

"These players are masters of their profession. They know how to bring out the song in a poetic speech and give it style at the same time that they keep it conversational."¹³

Time

"Fry's characters . . . are metaphors on man. They talk their heads off in cartwheeling leaps of language . . . They reveal almost with each line spoken something of the perpetually mysterious character of human nature. The theatricality of their action, the preposterousness of their language, seem after a while, quite as natural as a lesser theatricality, a lesser preposterousness."¹⁴

¹³"Seeing Things," XXXIII (Dec. 2, 1950), p. 69.

¹⁴"The Theatre," LVI (Nov. 20, 1950), p. 59.

The third principle, "a mixture of prose and verse is generally to be avoided" (Eliot himself did not use verse for the sermon in *Murder in the Cathedral* because (he says) the audience would think it unnatural to hear Thomas preaching in verse.) is followed by Fry until the last act when Skipps appears. His dialogue is prose except for one sentence. Tappercoom and Nicholas,—when talking to him, also speak prose. One justification for this lies in the theory that change of medium creates a contrast in characters and a relief in situation. Shakespeare has recourse to this method particularly in the speech of the farcical characters in his comedies.

Christopher Fry succeeds remarkably well in the fourth principle, that of bringing verse into the lives of the hearers. Although the setting is "as much 15th century as anything," the emotions, the descriptions, the actions are 20th century. The obvious level has not enough weight to satisfy the audience.¹⁵

The last principle is really an ideal toward which the verse dramatist should work. As I understand it, Eliot feels that there is a region between the conscious world and the unconscious. It is this range which poetic drama reaches when it approaches perfection. He says, that the ideal is in the main unattainable, but that Shakespeare reached it in some scenes—the balcony scene in *Romeo and Juliet*, for instance. I do not believe Fry attained it, at least not in the play as a whole. It is too earthy and full of the conscious world—The audience is not placed in the position where they reach the ultimate in aesthetic appreciation except for scattered phrases as—"Helen comes./Brushing the maggots from her eyes,/And clearing her throat of several thousand years,"—"The least/I can do is to fill the curliid shell of the world/With human deep-sea sound, and hold it to/The ear of God."—but he does more than follow these few rules. Christopher Fry—whether adhering to Eliot's rules or not has brought to his audiences realization that verse drama is a natural form of expression. The audience recognizes the difference between verse and prose and the supremacy of verse.

¹⁵The difference between Fry and Eliot is seen in this principle. Even though some may not grasp the symbolism in *The Lady*, the obvious level of meaning is apparent to all.

"... daughter of a double race"

By Jacqueline Cereghino

Winner of "Honors" in the Atlantic Monthly Contest

Climbing down from the Stockton Street car, she felt once more the broad cracks and sudden ridges of Chinatown sidewalks beneath the balls of her feet and smelled again the dank odor of poultry exhaling from the alley's unrefrigerated storehouses. It was more than a tourist's glance that she gave to the quiet, incensed Oriental gift shops on Pogoda Place. The old fascination she had experienced in deciphering the foreign neon characters over the Chinese ice cream parlors and laundries returned to her. It was still amusing she discovered, to count the rows and rows of gas meters over the stairway of the tall tenement on the corner. This trip to Chinatown was different. She knew she had recaptured something of the past she had left twelve years before.

All the way from the Ferry Building—up Market to Roos Brothers where she had transferred to the F car—and all during the jerky ride up Stockton Street to the edge of the Chinese section she had let her mind stretch back to touch those happier memories before she was eight—before she had moved away. She hadn't wanted to forget those early years in San Francisco. Late at night when she was alone and deep below the covers she had deliberately tried to remember the sunny mornings when in the doorway of her father's office she had played hopscotch with Maria Lin, Teresa Chung, and Toi San's youngest daughter, May Ri—golden-skinned little girls with short straight hair and slanted black eyes. Sometimes when they got tired they would sit down on the curb and tell stories. Most of all Lan liked to tell about her mother. "When Aunt Martha was visiting us last Christmas she told me lots of nice things about my mother. She was a beautiful American lady with blonde hair. Maybe I'll look like her when I grow up. Aunt Martha says my eyes are blue and round like hers." Lan remembered, too, how Maria, Teresa, and May Ri had worshipped her father, for it was Dr. Wong who brought medicine to their sick mothers and kept their baby brothers from dying of the flu. As soon as they would see him start up the steps with his square black suitcase they would grab hold of his arm, smile into his broad face, and hope for a handful of peppermint chews. And how they had loved Li Kim who had cared for her during the hours when her father was tending to his patients!

Li Kim had been her father's nurse when he was just a little boy in Nanking; and her greatest joy was to tell Lan the stories Peter had loved to hear—tales of flooded rice fields, tea and wafers, and shiny-haired ladies who stood like statues and dressed like silken-clad glass dolls.

But Aunt Martha wouldn't let her reminisce too long. "Don't be so dreamy-eyed, Lana. American girls are active. Your mother would want you to play ball and dance and dress the way Americans do. It is unfortunate that your mother married Peter Wong, but no one need ever suspect your background. You are white, Lana. Your hair even shows gold patches when you dry it out in the sun. No one will ever know."

Lana had never quite agreed with her aunt, but she had obeyed. She wasn't to think of those last months before her father died. When Dr. Wong realized that his tuberculosis was incurable he had given Lan into the keeping of his wife's sister in Los Angeles. Aunt Martha said it was proper to forget her father, his work, his name. She was no longer to be Lan Wong—the little white orphan left by a Chinese father—but Lana Wagner, the hundred per cent American niece of Martha Hamilton.

The first years away from home were the easiest. Grammar school had worn the democratic garb of childhood. No one cared what your name was, or what country your father came from, or whether your aunt lived by Wilshire or over on the East Side. Her classmates had accorded her a new distinction after the day she told them she was half Chinese. They had left their jump-ropes and jacks and ushered Lana over to a bench near the cafeteria. "Can you really read that up and down writing? What does Chinese ice cream taste like? Did your father really come from Asia?" . . . But in high school the lines of social demarcation had grown heavier.

"Look, fellows; there goes the Chink," Jimmie Clarke had shouted after her as she was leaving the school library. A pack of tenth graders had taken up the yell and started pulling the corners of their eyes sideways.

"You mean half-Chink," somebody else had hollered. The Chinese don't want her because she's not yellow, and we don't want her either 'cause she's only half white."

There was the Valentine dance when she was in her third year. Kenneth Blake had invited her. When she rushed to tell the other girls she wondered why their smiles were strained. Then Cynthia had shrugged her shoulders and said a trifle too casually, "Ken's a nice fellow. He's running for student body treasurer and every vote counts."

At basketball practice it was the same way. Lana's long-distance shots and her light-footed coverage of the court didn't matter. "You'll make the varsity for sure this year." Millis Adams sounded convincing, but Millie was just a freshman and she didn't understand lots of things. Lana never made the team, and all the others knew why.

It wasn't that Lana had no friends; people liked her. She was always asked to picnics and snow-trips—the big events that included

everybody. It was the smaller things—like an invitation to Betty's graduation tea, cokes after school with the right crowd, and phone calls from the girls on week-ends that she missed most.

Then something happened that changed her whole outlook. Aunt Martha's brother-in-law, Philip Randall, had connections with the Bank of America and arranged a position for Lana in the Sutter Street branch in San Francisco. She could board with Mr. Locaro's mother in the Marina. Mr. Locaro was assistant manager at Sutter Street and would watch out for her.

"Uncle Greg feels sorry for me," Lana had thought. He pretended not to notice when she left half her apple pie uneaten and spent too many hours alone with a book, but she had caught more than one of those meaningful looks that passed between him and Aunt Martha.

"We can't afford to send you to college, my dear; but this opportunity to live away from home and earn your own living will be an education in itself." Uncle Greg was so businesslike. Lana had hugged him dutifully and kissed Aunt Martha on the forehead. "They want me to get a fresh start. . . . Well, I will." . . .

The train ride up on the Daylight gave Lana time to make her plans. She had to succeed. Sliding her right foot into the aisle, she examined the three-inch heel on her new spectators. The pleats in the skirt of her powder blue suit were staying in pretty well, she thought; and the blue veil on her white straw sailor made her look at least nineteen. The right clothes helped, but she had to be sure. Long and critically she stared into the mirror of her compact. No, there was nothing about her appearance that could ever betray her. She would never answer to Lan Wong again.

There was no problem in getting acquainted at the bank. She remembered the very first week-end Clare had asked her to make up a foursome at tennis at the courts in Golden Gate Park. "You'll like Jack Wallace, honey. He's an excellent player and your type, too—the outdoor, all-American boy."

"Her type . . . all-American . . ." Lana had smiled.

But neither Jack Wallace nor any of the others had suspected the truth that Sunday, nor on the succeeding Sundays when the younger crowd from the bank met socially. Still, this resorting to duplicity hurt Lana more than she was willing to admit.

She had first felt uneasy the day the boys treated to an Italian dinner at the *Riviera* over in North Beach. "I've never eaten much foreign food before; have you?" Clare had remarked, passing a second platter of raviolis.

"Why, no," Lana had stammered. "My aunt preferred home cooking." Then the remembrance of blue bowls of chow mein and bean sprouts made the fork shake in her hand.

On another occasion—the afternoon the Locaros had taken her to lunch at the Palace Hotel—the jab of insincerity poked deeper. The music was soft, and she could hear the woman behind her discussing the couple at the next table. “If that isn’t poor taste! Take a look at that mulatto girl with the blond Navy ensign. I wonder why somebody doesn’t tell her to stay with her own race.”

Then there was the time they were browsing through the model home in St. Francis Woods. The real estate agent was undoubtedly provoked; and when Lana had turned to see the object of his annoyance she had looked straight into the disappointed faces of two well-dressed, elderly colored women. “Some people surely have their nerve. Imagine their thinking they’d be allowed to move into this district.”

The bitterest impression was made, though, that windy afternoon when they rode to the end of the line on the Powell Street cable car and then walked several blocks through the Chinese section. “I can’t understand how modern American people can live in those crowded flats,” Winnie had stated.

“Most white people would move out of a place like that,” Larry had answered; “but with other races it’s different. Their standard of living is different from ours. They won’t accept much help from us, but I think some suggestions from one of their own might go a long way.”

“From one of their own . . .” Lana couldn’t push the phrase out of her thoughts. She was running away from her own. All the way home—during the long walk to the top of Nob Hill, the taxi ride to Fisherman’s Wharf—she was quiet—too silent. Then she decided. She would apply for that cashier’s position in the Chinatown branch of the bank. Her work had been satisfactory and the transfer meant a raise in pay, so Mr. Locaro saw no reason why she shouldn’t make the change. She still went with the Sutter Street crowd at night and on week-ends, but it was her daytime hours that held an undeniable importance.

The yellow hands that twisted the weekly paycheck and grasped the ten five-dollar bills she counted out reminded her of some of the sick old men whose money her father would never accept. And the wrinkled, sallow ladies, stooped in their embroidered skirts, came to take the place of Li Kim, who long ago had returned to the Orient.

When young Chinese wives came in to make their deposits she studied their faces, their hair-do’s, the style of their clothes. She looked forward to and spoke often with the children who came in with their mothers. There was one especially whose name she would like to have asked. She was plump, freckled, and auburn-haired. Lana had turned twice when the child had skipped after the tiny woman in black, calling “Mama” as she reached up and kissed the Oriental face.

These were the things that pushed back and forth through Lana's mind like the slow, even, alternate motion of a windshield wiper on a foggy window. At one end of the arc were the thrills of the new popularity she had found, the experience of being accepted as one of the crowd, the sense of independence that a salary and clothes from Livingston's could give her, the launch rides to Paradise Cove, the train trips across the Golden Gate, the walks along the beach from Fleishaker's to the Cliff House. At the other end were the upturned roofs of Chinatown's wooden apartments where too many families crowded together in the same space; cheap shows and no ball parks, that robbed many boys of a decent childhood; old workmen who had labored in the same small shop, handling the same small coins since they were young workmen. But could she decide?

"Your mother was a beautiful American girl," she still heard Aunt Martha saying.

". . . They won't accept much help from us, but I think some suggestions from one of their own might go a long way." Larry Anderson's words sounded louder than ever.

Then as she sat in the Locaro living room, staring out the big bay window, watching the ocean liner start on its course across the Pacific toward China, she thought again of her father who had left his own home to bring health to his people in a new world. Suddenly she understood better her own mother who risked the displeasure of her family to marry a man whose life was pledged to the service of a people other than her own. Her mother had been a nurse; and the opportunity of using her training for those who needed it most had meant more to her than society, friends, and a name.

Too long Lan had been the daughter of a double race. Her mind was made up; the rest would not be too difficult. She had walked briskly into *A Kin's Beauty Shop*. "Make me up as a Chinese girl, as you would for a masquerade party," she told the operator. What would the hair-dresser think if she knew this masquerade was never to end?

Now she was actually back on Pagoda Place. She had already passed the gift shops, the ice cream parlors, and the laundries. The odor of poultry and incense were in the air. This was home again. She stopped long enough to catch her reflection in the show window of the candy store near the corner. "My eyes hardly even look blue any more, and they really seem slanted." Reaching into her purse she felt for the wallet with her new identification card in it . . . LAN WONG . . . AGE 20 . . . NATIONALITY—CHINESE.

Lan looked up at the tall building on the corner. She paused to read again the sign above the door—"CHINESE SOCIAL WELFARE AGENCY . . . Volunteers needed." With assurance and something of Peter Wong's gentle manner she walked up to the clerk at the desk.

On Bores

By Patricia Bollig

Winner of "Honors" in the Atlantic Monthly Essay Contest

A bore is generally classed as a person who wearies by dullness. This person is quite satisfied with himself and only comes under the class of bore when in contact with other persons. There are many types of bores; the list is almost endless. These bores are recognized not so much by their outward characteristics as by the feeling of suffocation they bring about in any person within hearing or seeing distance. This feeling that is brought about is the only thing bores have in common, and is the basis for their classification.

No one can avoid completely, situations involving bores. One of the outstanding feats of active bores is that of advancing upon a group and monopolizing the activities before any normal person is aware of the attack. Of course there are several theories for prevention but as yet a successful cure has not been discovered. For the purpose of comparison we shall consider the "Normal Person" and his normal reactions when introduced into the world of bores.

Because bores are not easily recognized it is best to study them through the effects produced on those around them. These effects depend to a great degree upon the circumstances involved and are for this reason quite varied. For example, when approached at a cocktail party by an overly prosperous self-made businessman the "Normal Person" smiles and says just enough to break down the slight barrier or initial shyness of a strange situation, and of course, immediately seals his doom, for talking bores seem to be blessed with the ability to live without breathing. Then our innocent bystander, in a vain attempt to save himself, quickly retreats to a couch and with a sigh lowers his body and lifts his mind to speak to the distinguished gentleman at his side. But he knows his mistake when he hears the bore right at his side continuing the one-sided conversation. All Normal Person can do now for diversion is to stare intently at the interesting pattern in the floor boards.

Even after two such trying attacks our victim is not immune, for before the party has ended he is approached by the back-slapping comedian who knows every anecdote ever written but tells only the ones everyone has heard. This bore uses the direct approach, "This is the funniest story ever written. A man is walking down the street, see, minding his own business, when . . ." By this time Normal Person is painfully aware that he has been tricked into listening to a story that would have trouble competing with "Little Red Riding Hood."

Although many bores reveal themselves at public gatherings their activities are not necessarily restricted to this sphere of influence. They are perhaps more obnoxious on trains, planes, and buses, because of the restricted space. The chances for Normal Person to escape under these circumstances are quite impossible.

On a train, usually in the club car, the bore again takes the opportunity to entertain. However, his approach is much less violent than that employed previously and thus the reaction is more subdued. Normal Person arrives, begins to read a magazine and before many pages have been covered, finds himself in conversation with a very pleasant individual—or so it seems. But gradually he realizes that this is another bore—a laughing bore, who smothers every remark with uncontrollable laughter. Normal Person changes the subject. He presents a new idea. The bore laughs all the more. He insults him, but the bore thinks it a tremendous joke. In fact he gives the impression that he and Normal Person are blood brothers.

But there is still another quite unique episode which not only causes a repulsion in the mind but also in the body. The exasperating realization accompanying this situation is that Normal Person invariably begins the trouble himself. This bore does not seem to need a special background or environment in which to perform, but uses the materials at hand. When a member of a group, he manages to look as though present time is something to be endured and that the past is the most important thing that has happened to man. Normal Person falls for this snare without any hesitation and contributes several innocent questions to give this clever bore the opening he needs to voice his philosophy of antiquity. The subtleness of the offense makes it difficult to classify this bore, for not only does he monopolize the conversation but he refuses to liberate his benefactor. He is from this day forward numbered among the unwilling audience of his new friend.

Woman is quite as vulnerable as man and in some cases she is more so. However, in her case the reactions depend more upon her age than on any other factor.

The young woman is very adept at avoiding situations with bores. She seems to have a sixth sense that guides her, and if this fails she usually extricates herself with very effective mental reservations. Although her excuses are quite common they are delivered with such tact that even the bore is not often aware that he no longer controls the situation. About the only time a young woman can be forced to remain in the company of a bore is in the case of a blind date. However, from the time of the introductions to the brief and final farewell she manages in a polite but firm manner to place an effective block in the way of the bore's subversive activities and at the same time to give the appearance of having an enjoyable evening. Unfortunately, there is a slight flaw even in this woman's

reactions to bores for at times she will consent to future dates in the vain hope that she may meet someone else. Of course, this is totally absurd, for the bore's friends show the same suspicious symptoms and simply aid in the immediate congestion of the situation.

The middle-aged woman presents another side to the story and seems to be the most gullible of all the bore's many victims. The doctor's office is the environment most conducive, in this case, to an effective Bore Situation, for all women are eager to discuss the operations they have undergone or hope to undergo. At the beginning of the conversation it is quite difficult to distinguish between Normal Person and the bore, but before long the stiffened posture and artificial smile of one woman immediately type her as the victim. It seems that the bore can outnumber every operation and pain she has had. The only way she can possibly win is to expose a second head, but even then she is taking a chance. Perhaps she reasons that if she doesn't have the experience she at least can give the bore a disturbing time with her relative's ailments. This situation calls forth all the bore's ingenuity and presents a definite challenge. There is nothing that appeals more to a bore than a challenge, and before the victim can come up for air she is completely overwhelmed. Perhaps the reason the bore is so successful with the middle-aged woman is that she has an unquenchable desire to speak and be spoken to. She has a deep interest in all people, especially those with problems, and invariably is taken into the situation by the few well-placed compliments offered by this clever bore.

The most reserved and controlled reaction to bores is exhibited by the elderly woman. After she once recognizes her companion as a bore she allows her thoughts to wander and resting with a placid smile on her face she has a very enjoyable time reliving her memories while the bore, mistaking her silence for rapt attention, drones on completely unaware of her partial escape. This course of action cannot be prescribed for the majority of people because it requires a tremendous collection of memoirs and a great deal of patience. Only the elderly woman can remain in the same position with the same immobile expression on her face for several hours. Normal Person usually is hampered by his desire to escape and tries to arrange it too quickly. Thus, he makes everyone, including the bore, aware of his defense tactics and invites complete defeat.

Elderly men do not have such a marked success, but they will not tolerate bores in any disguise for long. However, they cause so much of a disturbance that the bore's work is made more effective, for the neighboring population is so unnerved by the commotion and enraged bellows, they are willing to accept any diversion—even the bore. This situation is the most pleasing to the bore because he achieves his purpose without any exertion on his part. Of course,

this is the goal of all bores whether young or old, for there is no immediate danger of blame and no suspicious barriers to be overcome. However, this entire situation is futile in that nothing can be done directly to expose or incriminate the bore for the victim, to all appearances, bears the entire guilt.

Of course, bores do not necessarily need time to organize their attack; they can move in at a minute's notice without any preparation. It is regrettable that no laws can be passed to help protect the citizens from such hazards to their love and trust in their fellow man. Perhaps the only remedy for this problem is an attempt at enlightening the public and bringing it to the immediate attention of all social minded individuals.

If everyone is consciously aware of the problem, at least they will be more cautious in regard to new acquaintances and seemingly innocent situations. This attitude must be a constant state however, because the inactive relaxation period of bores often brings about a strong feeling of false security especially in Normal Person who is liable to relax his vigil before the danger is past.

An odd discovery is that bores are in no way depleted by their excessive action but seem to thrive on it, and there is no hope that they will outgrow their habits with age. It is obvious that the only other effective treatment would be complete isolation but this is not possible for the bore would never agree to leave the world void of his unlimited and adaptable talents.

POEM IN OCTOBER

By Dylan Thomas

from *Selected Writings, New Directions 1946*

*It was my thirtieth year to heaven
 Woke to my hearing from harbour and neighbour wood
 And the mussel pooled and the heron
 Priested shore
 The morning beckon
 With water praying and call of seagull and rook
 And the knock of sailing boats on the net webbed wall
 Myself to set foot
 That second
 In the still sleeping town and set forth.*

*My birthday began with the water—
 Birds and the birds of the winged trees flying my name
 Above the farms and the white horses
 And I rose
 In rainy autumn
 And walked abroad in a shower of all my days.
 High tide and the heron dived when I took the road
 Over the border
 And the gates
 Of the town closed as the town awoke.*

*A springful of larks in a rolling
 Cloud and the roadside bushes brimming with whistling
 Blackbirds and the sun of October
 Summery
 On the hill's shoulder,
 Here were fond climates and sweet singers suddenly
 Come in the morning where I wandered and listened
 To the rain wringing
 Wind blow cold
 In the wood faraway under me.*

*Pale rain over the dwindling harbour
 And over the sea wet church the size of a snail
 With its horns through the mist, and the castle
 Brown as owls,
 But all the gardens
 Of spring and summer were blooming in the tall tales
 Beyond the border and under the lark full cloud.
 There could I marvel
 My birthday
 Away but the weather turned around.*

*It turned away from the blithe country
 And down the other air and the blue altered sky
 Streamed again a wonder of summer
 With apples
 Pears and red currants
 And I saw in the turning so clearly a child's
 Forgotten mornings when he walked with his mother
 Through the parables
 Of sun light
 And the legends of the green chapels.*

*And the twice told fields of infancy
 That his tears burned my cheeks and his heart moved in mine.
 These were the woods the river and sea
 Where a boy
 In the listening
 Summertime of the dead whispered the truth of his joy
 To the trees and the stones and fish in the tide.
 And the mystery
 Sang alive
 Still in the water and singingbirds.*

*And there could I marvel my birthday
 Away but the weather turned around. And the true
 Joy of the long dead child sang burning
 In the sun.
 It was my thirtieth
 Year to heaven stood there then in the summer noon
 Though the town below lay leaved with October blood.
 O may my heart's truth
 Still be sung
 On this high hill in a year's turning.*

But the Weather Turned Around

By Mary Joan Storm

Given Honorable Mention in the Atlantic Monthly Essay Contest

When Dylan Thomas published his first book of poetry in 1935, critics were bewildered. One said that "it is the most absolute poetry that has been written in our time," another that "it is nothing short of an uncondacted tour of Bedlam." Perhaps there are traces of Bedlam in his earlier poems, but a move toward clarification is apparent in such recent poetry as "Fern Hill," "Poem in October," and "On His Birthday." In spite of the charges of obscurity, the later poems are demonstrably built on a clear framework.

Since in his early poetry Thomas's imagery was frequently Freudian, it may be lawful here to use a Freudian definition to unlock some of his meanings. A dream, according to Freud, is a series of images apparently contradictory and nonsensical but arising from hidden material that yields a clear meaning. So Thomas makes artificial dreams: the rich confusion of his surface both conceals and reveals the meaning. It conceals, in that at first one sees only dreamlike pictures; it reveals, in that this surface confusion adds to the final meaning, or in a larger sense is the meaning itself. In other words, the seeming confusion of colorful images, when the mind has resolved it into order, proves to be an essential part of the total experience which is the poem.

"Poem in October," for example, presents this seeming chaos of images which, however, bear traces of sequential narrative recounting a literal walk to a summery hill. This walk, on another level of meaning, is the journey back to his youth. Let us try to unravel the literal prose meaning, even though in the process we must do some temporary violence to the poem: The man wakes and goes for a walk on his thirtieth birthday. It is rainy autumn. He climbs to the top of a hill where the sun is shining. He compares and contrasts the scene in the valley with the summery hill. This warm summer reminds him of his childhood. He reminisces and prays for another year's life in the stability of the world he now knows.

On the symbolic level the poet lays stress on the permanence which underlies the surface flux of passing seasons, time, and life. The phrase "heart's truth," which occurs in a climactic position near the end of the poem and pulls together many strands of meaning, is related to this underlying permanence in things. Truth remains even though the outward manifestations of it change. Although the outward appearances of the person change from childhood to maturity the "heart's truth" remains.

This "heart's truth" is a kind of telescoping of all the joy of the speaker's whole life. (The speaker equates truth and joy: "the truth of his joy"; "the true joy . . . sang burning in the sun.") He also equates his own heart now with the heart he possessed as a boy ("his heart moved in thine")—this is another aspect of the stability of "heart's truth."

The man rejoices as he realizes this permanence. He is the same person as the boy in the "Summertime of the dead whispered the truth of his joy . . . /and the mystery/Sang alive/Still. . . ." He is so much the same person as the "long dead child" that "his (the child's) tears burned my cheeks and his heart moved in mine." The childhood's joy and truth is the same joy and truth he feels now ("And I saw in the turning so clearly a child's/Forgotten mornings"). This "heart's truth" is still to be "sung" even though Heraclitean change continues to flow ("in a year's turning") over the foundational permanence.

Besides this governing dichotomy of permanence and flux, there are other mutually contrasting elements: maturity-childhood, autumn-summer, supernature-nature. The maturity, autumn, supernature group is contrasted with the childhood, summer, nature series. As the seasons flow from one to another so do the states of man. He moves from childhood to maturity, but in the seasons as in man there are things which remain. The child's joy and truth is again found and held "Though the town below lay leaved with October blood" (though he is in his maturity).

The joys of childhood are symbolized by images of external nature. When the man is in the "summery land" "across the border" (childhood) the images are those of nature:

*A springful of larks in a rolling
Cloud and the roadside bushes brimming with whistling
Blackbirds and the sun of October
Summery
On the hill's shoulder, . . .*

"But the weather turned around" and in contrast to this natural joy of childhood we have the man-made town "in rainy autumn," and the "sea wet church . . ./With its horns through mist" symbolizing stormy ("I wandered and listened/To the rain wringing/Wind blow cold/In the wood far away under me") maturity in the autumn rain.

The storms of maturity have deepened his capacity for joy and added a new kind of supernatural joy. This is shown by the repeated use of the word "heaven" to symbolize a desired goal: "It was my thirtieth year to (toward) heaven/Woke to my hearing"; "It was my thirtieth/Year to heaven stood there then in the summer moon."

Underlining the notion of heaven as a goal is the symbolic usage made of two different kinds of chapels: The child's "green chapel" and the "sea wet church" of maturity. The child's chapel is a church of nature rather like Herrick's ". . . Each Porch, each doore, ere this,/An Arke a Tabernacle is/Made up of white-thorn neatly enterwove." (Cf. Cleanth Brooks' *Well Wrought Urn* for a description of the poetic tension between Christian and pagan rites celebrating springtime in "Corinna's Going A-Maying"). Like Corinna, the speaker in his childhood walks on the holy ground of natural beauty: "Through the parables/Of sun light/And the legends of the green chapels." of nature. The church of the speaker's maturity, on the other hand, is a conventional building with its two steeples shrouded in mystery—a hint of the supernatural, perhaps. It is "the sea wet church the size of a snail/With its horns through mist." The church is a conventional one. Perhaps the contrast is drawn to show that in his maturity the man seeks the conventional established things. Here this established thing

is a church which further signifies a level of reality existing above the simply natural.

The poem is full of water-rain-sea imagery. This sets the stage for the rebirth theme which is implicit in the references to childhood beginning with the summer symbolism of stanza three. Water is the traditional rebirth, new-life metaphor (cf. Frazer, also Eliot's use of this symbol in *The Waste Land*). This symbol has special significance for Thomas. Dylan, the poet's first name is Welsh for *tide*; it is also the name of Auranhod's child (in mythology) who plunged into the sea at birth and became a god of the sea. Even though such a relationship with a poet's life is not always legitimately drawn when discussing a work of art, it is perhaps permissible in this case since the poem was written by Thomas for his own birthday.

From this plunging into water and being reborn, or, as in the poem, going back to "twice told fields of infancy" and recapturing "the truth of his joy" the person emerges in one instance a god, in the other a mature man possessing, paradoxically, the "heart's truth" of his childhood's joy simultaneously with the deeper happiness of his maturity.

Two other patterns of imagery which at times deepen to symbolism, also function as unifying forces in the poem. There are first of all, the birds: seagulls, owls, herons fitting into the symbolic pattern of mature life; larks, blackbirds, singing birds standing for the days of childhood. Secondly, there is the pattern made by the system of images having a religious connotation: "heaven," "water praying," "wet church," "parables of sun light," "green chapel," "mystery sang alive." The function of these patterns will be further clarified as we proceed with the stanza by stanza analysis which is next in order.

In the first line heaven awoke to the speaker, and at the same time he himself woke to the new day, his thirtieth birthday:

*It was my thirtieth year to heaven
Woke to my hearing from harbour and neighbour wood . . .*

Heaven woke to him because through the years he had built toward a greater realization of something possessed in childhood, but only reaching fulfillment in his maturity. We later find this something to be his "heart's truth" which is a kind of joy, as has been shown above.

At dawn ("The morning beckon"—*beckon* here seems to be a noun, but it has verb affiliations) the speaker with a kind of exultant eagerness ("Myself to set foot/That second") sets forth from the still sleeping town." It is nature (the symbol for childhood) which beckons to him. Heaven wakes "to my hearing" from "neighbor wood/And the mussel pooled . . . shore." It is a call to come out

and renew his childhood joy, to "set forth" "over the border" into a land of natural beauty symbolizing childhood. He heeds the call and goes abroad in his maturity ("In rainy autumn") in the remembrance of his past life ("in a shower of all my days").

"High tide and the heron dived," in stanza two, has reference to the impermanence of the changing tide, and the movement (change of position) of the bird. The tide, on the other hand, has an element of permanence—it recurs according to a regular pattern. The heron, too, whether he moves or stands still, remains himself. Here again we see the permanence-flux theme recurring. Time passes; things change; there is movement throughout the poem. But there is also stability.

"And the gates/Of the town closed as the town awoke" carries on the childhood-maturity theme. Man made things are again placed in rainy autumn or later life, and natural things in the summer of childhood, e.g., the town as a man made object is across the border in the autumn weather). The image seems to mean that before the town is awake it is vulnerable and open and natural as a child is, but when it awakes it closes in to itself as an adult closes in and fortifies himself with reserve.

The rebirth theme becomes prominent in the third stanza. The man is still an adult ("the rain wringing/ Wind" blows cold) but he is beginning to recapture his youth ("the sun of October/Summer/On the hill's shoulder"). He is conscious of age. He is also aware of his autumn life

. . . . where I wandered and listened
To the rain wringing
Wind blow cold
In the wood faraway under me.

In stanza four one again sees the speaker place man-made objects ("The sea wet church the size of a snail/With its horns through the mist and the castle/Brown as owls") in autumn rain or his maturity, and then when the "weather has turned around," he uses nature imagery "the gardens/Of spring and summer were blooming in the tall tales/Beyond the border and under the lark full cloud") in the summer of his childhood. Another poem with a similar theme, "Fern Hill," uses nature imagery almost exclusively and it is also almost exclusively a poem of youth. The youth maturity movement in "Fern Hill" is the exact opposite of the movement in "Poem in October." In "Fern Hill" the poem begins with carefree childhood, moves toward maturity, and ends on an ominous note. In "Poem in October," however, the man is first the adult, then he goes back into childhood, and the poem ends on an exultant note.

With stanza five the autumn weather turns around and the man's world streams again with the "blue altered sky/ . . . a wonder of summer" and he sees in this change the childhood world he has left:

*And I saw in the turning so clearly a child's
 Forgotten mornings when he walked with his mother
 Through the parables
 Of sunlight
 And the legends of the green chapels*

He goes into "the twice told fields of infancy." The man and the boy are the same person. The man is again alive in the childhood world: "his tears burned my cheeks and his heart moved in mine."

*These were the woods the river and sea
 Where a boy
 In the listening
 Summertime of the dead whispered the truth of his joy . . .*

The joy is renewed ("And the mystery/Sang alive"). "And there [he] could marvel [his] birthday away [in the child's world] but the weather turned around" (he returned to maturity). The child is gone ("dead") but joy—his "heart's truth" remains ("Joy of the long dead child sang burning/In the sun").

In the last stanza the heaven motif is repeated. That is still his goal ("thirtieth year to heaven". Again in his maturity ("The town lay leaved with October blood")) he retains his youthful joy ("in the summer noon"). He has, on this birthday, a simultaneity of the joys of all his life. It is a little like Boethius's definition of eternity: "The perfect and simultaneous possession of . . . life." The speaker closes the poem with a prayer for another year's life and a renewed realization of the "heart's truth."

*O may my heart's truth
 Still be sung
 On this high hill in a year's turning.*

In this analysis we have used Freud's definition of a dream ("a series of images apparently contradictory and non-sensical but arising from hidden material that yields a clear meaning") as a key to unlock some of the poem's meanings. The series of apparently contradictory and non-sensical surface images reveals, upon investigation, a closely unified interrelationship. And under the surface a clear framework of meaning can be discerned. The imagistic profusion, moreover, far from being superfluous, adds to the total aesthetic experience and is an integral part of the poem.

Alumnae News

Members of the Alumnae Association have expressed their interest in Alumnae News and have asked that it be continued. To insure this, but one thing is necessary, that the Alumnae send in NEWS, and not leave this duty entirely to the faculty.

Our officers deserve great credit for the Fashion Show and Tea which was held in May. The occasion brought together old friends, provided them with an enjoyable afternoon and added materially to the "Endowment Fund" and Scholarship toward which Alumnae Officers and Class Representatives worked strenuously all year.

Among new arrivals in the families of our Alumnae mothers, notices have been received:

To *Mr. and Mrs. George Trammell* (Helene Perry) a daughter, Christine.

To *Jim and Huguette Clarized* (Huguette Hery) a daughter, Jane Marie.

To *Mr. and Mrs. Herbert McGrath, Jr.* (Geraldine Biggs) a son, Evan Francis.

To *Larry and Mary Jeanne Murray* (Mary Jeanne Hoxmeier) a son, Kevin Joseph.

Among wedding notices are those of *Miss Shirley Teichman* to Mr. C. J. Conniry in St. Brigid's Church, Pacific Beach.

Miss Marie Carol Aguiar to Mr. Paul Donald Lemke, in St. Catherine's Church, Kealia, Lauai, T.H.

Miss Mary Clare O'Brien to Mr. Robert Von Herzen Pettit in the Church of the Transfiguration.

Miss Susan Robertson to Mr. George François Gerard.

Miss Frances Delos Hills to Mr. Charles Lester Sorrentine, Jr., in Saint Monica's Church, Santa Monica.

Miss Katherine Ashe to Donald John Armstrong in St. Martin of Tours Church, Westwood.

Miss Grace Stark to Mr. John Phillip Holcomb in Holy Spirit Church, Los Angeles.

Miss Kathleen O'Rourke to Dr. Eric Theodore Yuhl in the Church of St. Paul the Apostle.

With a double wedding ceremony, *Miss Mary Cummings* to Mr. John Joseph Norton and *Miss Patricia Ann Cummings* to Mr. Norbert Robert Horta in the Church of St. Paul the Apostle, Westwood.

Catherine Ameche Breen announces that her eldest daughter has started her school life with our Sisters in Reseda. Our president, *Helen Shindel Pickett's* daughter has enrolled in the High School of St. Mary's Academy.